

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested. In this amendment, claims 28, 29 and 32, 35 and 41 have been canceled, and claims 27, 31, 36-40 and 60 have been amended. No new matter has been added.

Claims 24-42, 45, 46 and 50-56 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent no. 6,493,671 of Ladd et al. ("Ladd") in view of U.S. Patent no. 6,240,448 of Imielinski et al. ("Imielinski").

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections. The amendments to the claims are made only to correct minor informalities and to place the claims in what Applicants consider to be better form. The amendments are not made in response to the rejections or to comply with any statutory requirement of patentability, since no such amendments are believed to be necessary.

Response to Rejections

To support an obviousness rejection, all of the limitations of an applicant's claims must be taught or suggested by the cited art. MPEP § 2143.03 (citing In re Royka, 490 F.2d 981, 180 USPQ 580 (CCPA 1974)). Moreover, the claimed invention as a whole must be obvious in view of the cited art; it is not sufficient that individual limitations may be separately disclosed in the prior art. 35 U.S.C. § 103(a); Stratoflex, Inc. v. Aeroquip Corp., 713 F.2d 1530, 218 USPQ 871 (Fed. Cir. 1983). The present rejections fail both of these requirements.

It is useful to begin discussion with claim 24, which is as follows:

24. A method of executing a spoken dialog between a user and a speech-enabled site in a network including a plurality of voice-hyperlinked speech-enabled sites, the method comprising:

acquiring information associated with the user at a first speech-enabled site of the plurality of speech-enabled sites **during a first spoken dialog** between the user and the first speech-enabled site;

in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access a second speech-enabled site of the plurality of speech-enabled sites, providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site; and

optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user to reduce a number of states of the second spoken dialog.

(Emphasis added.)

A. The cited combination of references fails to disclose or suggest all of the limitations of Applicants' claims or the claimed invention as a whole.

As discussed in detail below, the cited references do not disclose or suggest (either individually or in combination): acquiring information associated with a user during a first spoken dialog at a first speech-enabled site and, in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access a second speech-enabled site, providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site, and then optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user to reduce the number of states of the second dialog.

Although Applicants' argument is directed to the cited combination of references, it is necessary to first ascertain what the references' individual teachings are in order to determine what combination (if any) could be made from them.

Ladd, the primary cited reference, relates to a markup language for providing interactive services on a network. Ladd also generally discloses the use of a "voice browser" and a speech-enabled network node from which users can access information, using spoken dialogs. However, that is not what Applicants have claimed, and Ladd discloses little else, if anything, that is relevant to Applicants' claims. The Examiner admits that Ladd does not teach using an application in a plurality of speech enabled sites (Office Action, p. 3), and Applicant agrees with that. However, the Examiner cites Imielinski for such teaching, and contends the claimed subject matter would be obvious based on a combination of the teachings of Ladd and Imielinski.

Imielinski relates to a system in which hyperlinked Web pages are embedded with audio content and can be accessed by a user using a telephone keypad or spoken commands. However, in contrast with claim 24, Imielinski does not disclose or suggest acquiring information associated with a user during a first spoken dialog at one speech-enabled site and, in response to the user initiating a voice hyperlink to access another speech-enabled, providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled site, and then optimizing a second spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled site by applying the information associated with the user that was acquired at the first site. Imielinski particularly does not disclose or suggest

optimizing the second spoken dialog by reducing the number of dialog states at the second site. Imielinski also fails to disclose or suggest that the information associated with the user is acquired at one speech-enabled site and used at another for the above-mentioned purpose.

Ladd also fails to disclose or suggest these features that are missing from Imielinski. Therefore, no combination of Ladd and Imielinski could produce or even suggest all of the limitations of the present invention, as set forth in claim 24, nor could it suggest the claimed invention as a whole. Therefore, the current rejection of claim 24 and all claims which depend on it is improper and should be overturned for at least the above reasons.

B. Specific Response to Examiner's Comments

In the present Office Action, the Examiner makes several contentions which are incorrect and/or irrelevant. For example, the Examiner contends that Ladd "teaches 'using the information to optimize . . . processing system' as using an interpreter, parser, to interpret the voice request (col. 11 line 35 – col. 15 lines 15)." (Office Action, p. 3, first para.) That contention lacks merit; the cited text contains no hint of optimizing a spoken dialog between a user and machine, and particularly not optimizing a spoken dialog by reducing the number of dialog states (a limitation which the Examiner fails to address in the Office Action). Applicants note that the Examiner has cited a very large section of text as disclosing this feature. If the Examiner intends

to maintain this position, the Examiner should point out more specifically where Ladd discloses this.

Further, the Examiner contends that “Ladd . . . teaches reducing the amount of speech input to the browser . . .” (Office Action, p. 3, first para.) However, Applicants find no such feature recited in Applicants claims, and so that contention appears to be non sequitur.

Similarly, the Examiner contends that Ladd teaches “a second spoken dialog to improve the first dialog (col. 16 lines 1-19; col. 17 lines 5-29; col. 19-26).” First, as in the above example, Applicants find no such feature recited in Applicants claims. To the contrary, Applicants’ claims recite using information obtained in a first spoken dialog to optimize a second spoken dialog, not vice versa. Further, in contrast with Applicants’ claims, the cited text relates to a single dialog, not to two separate dialogs involving two separate speech-enabled sites. Moreover, the Examiner’s citation of eight full columns of text (col. 19-26) as allegedly disclosing this particular feature is telling in its lack of specificity.

For these additional reasons, therefore, no combination of Ladd and Imielinski could produce or even suggest all of the limitations of the present invention, as set forth in claim 24, nor suggest the claimed invention as a whole. Therefore, the current rejection of claim 24 and all claims which depend on it is improper and should be overturned for at least the above reasons.

The above comments are largely applicable to the remaining independent claims, as will be readily apparent. Nonetheless, the following remarks are believed to be pertinent.

Claim 27

Claim 27 provides:

27. A method of facilitating operation of a plurality of interconnected speech-enabled sites on a network, the method comprising:
 providing a server system on the network; and
 operating the server system to selectively provide the speech-enabled sites with access to information **about users** of the speech-enabled sites, **the information acquired during spoken dialogs between the users and one or more processing systems, the information for use in optimizing spoken dialogs between the users and the speech enabled sites.** (Emphasis added.)

Applicants' arguments above regarding the use of information to optimize spoken dialogs also apply to claim 27. In addition, neither Ladd nor Imielinski contains any disclosure or suggestion that the information is information about users of the speech-enabled sites, as recited in claim 27. This recited feature renders claim 27 separately patentable from claim 24. Because neither Ladd nor Imielinski discloses or suggests such a feature, no combination of Ladd and Imielinski could produce or even suggest all of the limitations of the present invention, as set forth in claim 27, nor suggest the claimed invention as a whole. Consequently, claim 27 and its dependent claims are patentable over the cited art.

Claim 60 recites operations similar to those of claim 27 discussed above and is therefore patentable over the cited art for similar reasons.

Claim 31 provides:

31. (Currently amended) A method of facilitating operation of a plurality of interconnected speech-enabled sites on a network, the method comprising:

using a processing system on the network to execute a browser for enabling a user to access the speech-enabled sites; and

using the browser to provide information associated with the user and acquired by a first site on the network to a second site on the network, the information for use by the second site in optimizing a spoken dialog between the user and the second site. (Emphasis added.)

Applicants' remarks above regarding the use of information to optimize spoken dialogs also apply to claim 27. In addition, neither Ladd nor Imielinski contains any disclosure or suggestion of using a browser in the manner recited in claim 31, i.e., to provide information associated with the user and acquired by a first site on the network to a second site on the network, the information for use by the second site in optimizing a spoken dialog between the user and the second site. This recited feature renders claim 31 separately patentable from the other claims. Consequently, claim 31 and its dependent claims are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 45 provides:

45. A method of facilitating operation of a speech-enabled site on a network, the method comprising:

receiving a request at a server system for information associated with a user, the request associated with a speech-enabled site on the network and relating to a dialog between the speech-enabled site and the user, the information maintained on a second site on the network; and

using the server system to provide a service of the second site to the speech-enabled site, to provide the information associated with the user to the speech-enabled site.

As with the aforementioned claims, no combination of the cited references discloses or suggests such a method. In particular, the cited references fail to disclose or suggest receiving a request at a server system for information associated with a user, where the request is associated with a speech-enabled site on the network and relates to a dialog between the speech-enabled site and the user, and where the information is maintained on a second site on the network; and using the server system to provide a service of the second site to the speech-enabled site, to provide the information associated with the user to the speech-enabled site. These recited features render claim 27 separately patentable from the other claims.

Therefore, no combination of Ladd and Imielinski could produce or even suggest all of the limitations of the present invention, as set forth in claim 45, nor suggest the claimed invention as a whole. Consequently, claim 45 and its dependent claims are patentable over the cited art.

Claim 50 provides:

50. (Amended) An apparatus configured to allow a user to interactively browse a telephony-based network, the apparatus comprising:

- means for coupling a user to a first speech-enabled service at a first location on the network;

- means for acquiring information associated with the user;

- means for outputting **an indication audibly detectable by the user, the indication corresponding to a second speech-enabled service at second location on the network;**

- means for detecting the user speaking an utterance matching the

indication;

means for providing the user with access to the second speech-enabled service in response to the user speaking the utterance matching the indication; and

means for providing the information associated with the user to the second speech-enabled service in response to the user speaking the utterance matching the indication, the information for use by the second speech-enabled service to optimize a spoken dialog between the user and the second speech-enabled service. (Emphasis added.)

Ladd and Imielinski contain no disclosure or suggestion (either individually or in combination) of such an apparatus as a whole, and particularly, of one which includes the features highlighted above in bold. This recited feature renders claim 50 separately patentable from the other claims. Consequently, claims 50 and 51 are allowable over the cited art.

Claim 52 provides:

52. A system comprising:

a first processing system configured to execute **a speech-enabled browser, the browser configured to maintain information associated with a user; and**

a second processing system coupled on a network to the first processing system and configured to operate as a speech-enabled site, the second processing system configured to

in response to receiving an access request from a remote user, transmit a request to the browser for the information associated with the user;

receive the information associated with the user in response to transmitting the request;

apply the information associated with the user to optimize the dialog with the user by reducing the number of required states of the dialog; and

execute the optimized dialog with the user. (Emphasis added.)

Ladd and Imielinski contain no disclosure or suggestion (either individually or in combination) of a system as recited in claim 52. In particular, neither Ladd nor Imielinski discloses or suggests a second processing system operating as a speech-enabled site which, in response to the user requesting access to that site, transmits a request to the speech-enabled browser for information associated with the user, and in response to receiving such information, uses the information to optimize a dialog that it executes with the user.

Therefore, no combination of Ladd and Imielinski could produce or even suggest all of the limitations of the present invention, as set forth in claim 52, nor suggest the claimed invention as a whole. Consequently, claims 52 and its dependent claims are patentable over the cited art.

Claim 56 includes limitations similar to those in claim 52 discussed above and is allowable over the cited art for similar reasons along with its dependent claims.

Dependent Claims

In view of the above remarks, a specific discussion of the dependent claims is considered to be unnecessary. Therefore, Applicants' silence regarding any dependent claim is not to be interpreted as agreement with, or acquiescence to, the rejection of such claim or as waiving any argument regarding that claim.

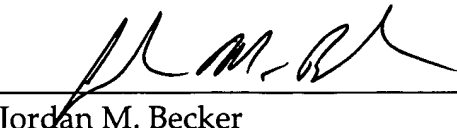
Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is earnestly requested.

If any additional fee is required, please charge Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,
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